

SEPTEMBER

2021

1455



# Movable Type

A Summer of  
Storytelling

A BI-MONTHLY  
PUBLICATION  
**CREATED FOR  
WRITERS**

ISSUE NO.

**7**

# Contents

---

Director's Note—*Sean Murphy*.....1

## FEATURED WRITERS

Excerpt from Letters to My White Male Friends—*Dax-Devlon Ross* .....2  
 Excerpt from Off Our Chests: A Candid Tour Through  
 the World of Cancer—*Dr. John and Liza Marshall* .....12

## PERSPECTIVES (ESSAYS & ARTICLES)

They Grow Up So Fast—*Holly Smith*.....16  
 Seeing the World Through Fiction—*Clifford J. Garstang* .....18  
 Storytelling, Memory, and the Island of My Heart—*Heather Frese*.....22  
 An Essay and a Poem—*Krystle May Statler*.....26  
 Poems—*E. Ethelbert Miller*.....30  
 The cherry tree was taken by lightning—*Jessi Lewis* .....33

Editor's Note—*Bethanne Patrick*.....34

## CULTIVATING CREATIVITY & COMMUNITY

Call for Essays .....36  
 1455 News .....36

## DIRECTOR'S CUT

The discovery of the first cave drawings offers conclusive evidence of at least one thing: the power of story has been with us as long as we've been able to communicate. One might suggest these crude but often beautiful images are the earliest examples of what Whitman lovingly christened barbaric yawps: individuals using whatever means were at their disposal to create, warn, instruct, or impress. Mostly impress. And thus, storytelling was invented.

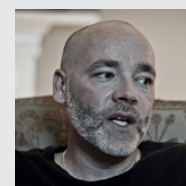
The trajectory we can easily trace from these primordial sketches to social media involves the magic of narrative. 1455 takes its name in commemoration of the year Gutenberg began printing books—arguably the signal most important sociopolitical advancement of the millennium. Without this miracle, the act of storytelling would remain, at worst, an oral tradition; at best, reserved for an elite class controlling both the creation and dissemination of information. As such, knowledge, literacy, and an appreciation of cultural traditions were advanced, practically overnight.

Flash forward several centuries, add the Internet and, circa 2021, it's never been easier or less expensive to get one's story into the world. On the other hand, there's never been more competition—more content—in this ever-crowded space. 1455's mission is at once humble yet ambitious: we want to promote creativity and build community, and we achieve this by extolling the art of storytelling. This includes interrogating what storytelling is; how we define it, who produces and receives it, what cultural and commercial mechanisms enable (and prevent) it's distribution, etc. In an important way, storytelling is what connects us with our earliest ancestors: the compulsion to convey what we see, how we feel, what we want. Importantly, the fact that so many stories are overlooked or never have a chance at getting told—because of cultural or economic factors—is itself a story, and one 1455 seeks to ameliorate.

Our annual Summer Festival is, in every sense, a celebration of storytelling, designed to showcase the art and joy of this uniquely human form of expression. This year, our biggest and best event yet, featured a diverse array of more than 200 speakers across 75+ panels all focused on the power of storytelling and the crucial role it plays in the creative and academic fields, as well as the business and political arenas. We welcomed participants from around the country and globe including Africa and the UK, all uniting across three focal tracks of "Inspiration & Advocacy," "Timely & Topical" and "Craft & Community."

For this issue of Movable Type, we invited some of these speakers to share a bit more about the stories they told and are telling. The results are at once a distillation and continuation of the festival and what it provides: insights on the craft, recollections from the event, and original poetry. For those who were unable to participate in real time, these pieces should entice you to seek out the original sessions, all of which were recorded and can be viewed, anytime, for free, at 1455's YouTube channel.

Our story at 1455 is our daily work to seek those storytellers, find them, and whenever possible, provide them a forum. 1455's Summer Fest (and our year-round, free programming) serve to remind us we can—and should—come together to honor those who entertain, inform, and inspire us. We hope this event serves as a reminder that when we recognize what unites us, we're capable of anything.



**Sean Murphy**  
 Executive Director, 1455



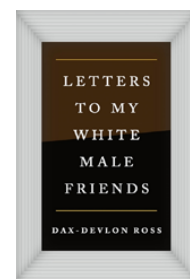
**See Sean speaking with award-winning authors Deesha Philyaw and Brian Broome at SummerFest**

[youtube.com/watch?v=WG\\_uXYdo00](https://youtube.com/watch?v=WG_uXYdo00)

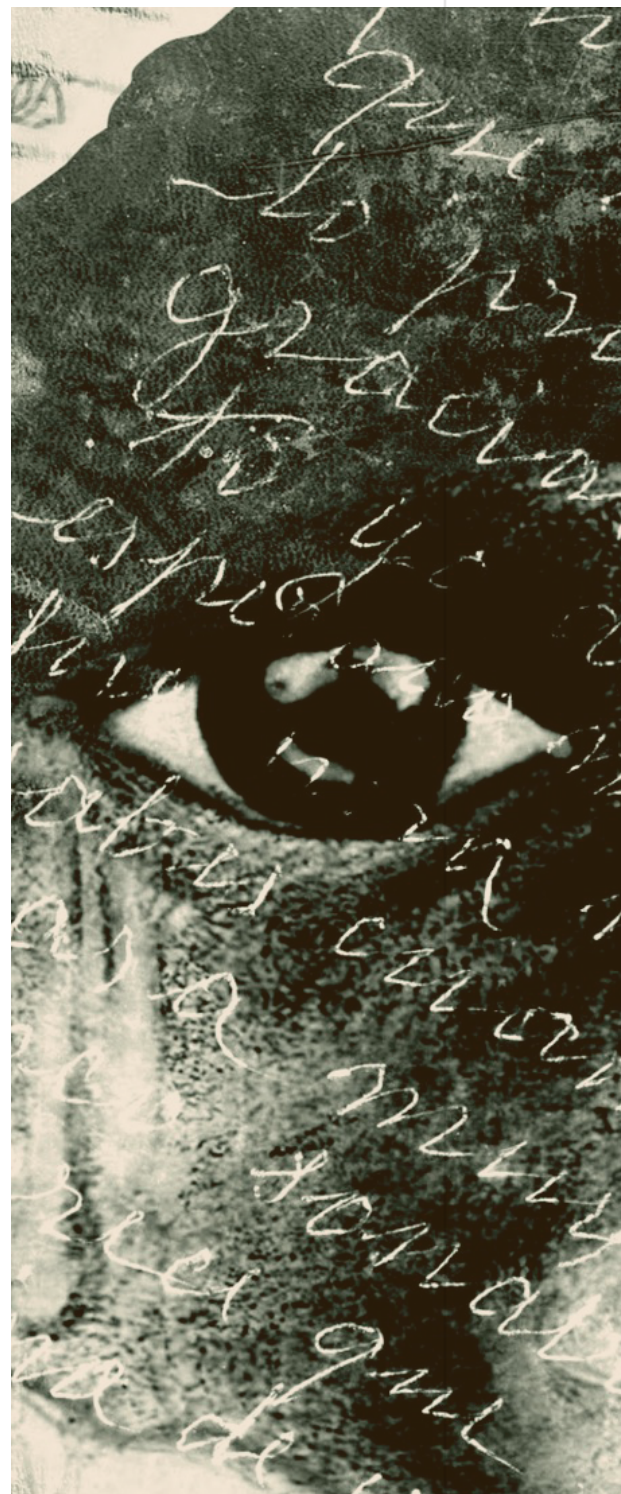
*Excerpt from*  
**Letters to My  
White Male  
Friends**

Dax-Devlon Ross

*Letters to My White Male Friends* speaks directly to the millions of middle-aged white men who are suddenly awakening to race and racism.



Purchase  
this title from  
[bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org)



Yesterday, a grand jury exonerated Breonna Taylor's killers. A week ago the City of Louisville paid her family a \$12 million settlement. I am sitting with the weight of both actions and wondering what such a sum matters to a family who will never be whole again.

As is the case every morning, my toddler daughter and I had breakfast. She tossed her cereal and eggs on the floor and I picked it all up. She baited me into a game of chase, and I squatted down and crawled after her giggles. At forty, I couldn't picture bringing a child into this world. At forty-five, fatherhood is my highest calling. This morning, I had to think about losing my baby girl abruptly and unjustly and then being told no wrongdoing occurred. It isn't the first time I've looked at her and felt my heart well up with anguish and my mind go blank with fear, and maybe that's the point.

Have you ever looked at your daughter, worried that the people our taxes support and upon whom our laws bestow unique authority and immunity will break into her home and shoot her dead? And have you also ever felt utterly powerless to do anything to stop it?

I wish the answer were no, but right now I need the answer to be yes. Feel this moment fully.

*Breathe it in. What you are experiencing is racism in real time.*

The case turned on whether the cops announced themselves before forcing their way into her home. Taylor's boyfriend said again and again that the officers did not. He believed they were being burglarized, so he fired the single warning shot that set off more than twenty-five bullets from police. Eleven witnesses also said that they did not hear the cops announce themselves. Yet, in its decision, the grand jury relied on a twelfth witness who also originally said he did not hear the cops announce themselves but later changed his story after a third interview with authorities.

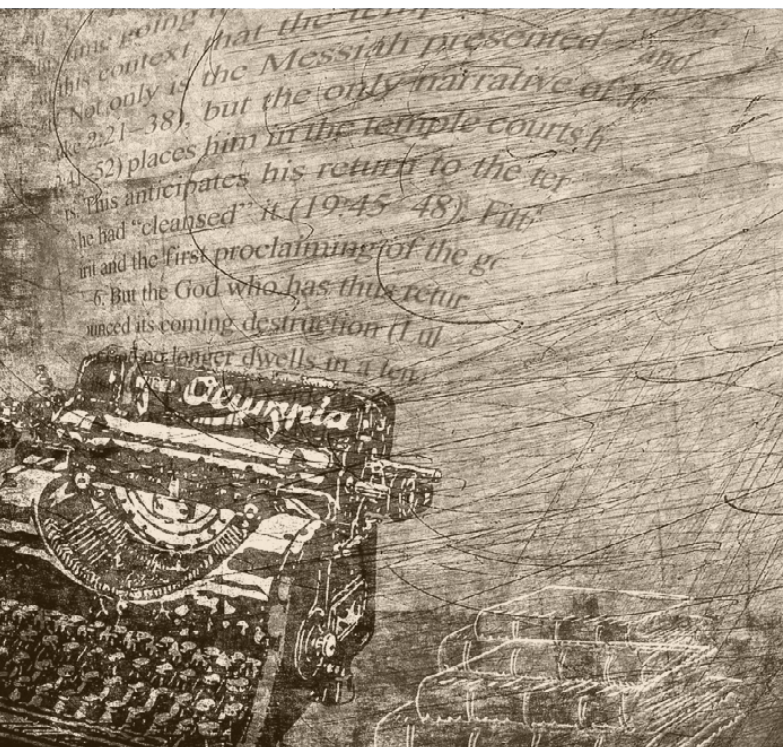
The grand jury chose its allegiance to the culture of white disbelief that perpetuates



doubt and denialism in and disregard for the stories Black people tell America about their experiences.

*That disbelief is killing us.*

Over the past few months, the term systemic racism has gone viral. I hear and see it all over the place. The naming of the problem has been important. The conservative-backed color-blindness movement of the 1990s made racism a curse word and anyone who uttered it paranoid, an opportunist looking to cash in on white guilt or a sad sack reaching for an excuse to explain away his failures.



Now, at least, we can say the word racism out loud again and not get shouted down or waved off. What wakes me up at night is my fear that in naming the problem we mistakenly believe we have a shared understanding of its depth and complexity. I fear, as always, that we think we are ready to take action when we still have lots of learning ahead.

Racism's secret sauce is and has always been that it hides in plain sight. Its most vulgar expressions—slavery, lynching, land theft, the Klan, Donald Trump—are so obviously vile that most of us can comfortably tell ourselves that we're not racist since we're not or would never do that. That disgust with and desire to distance ourselves from racism's ugliest expressions blocks us from probing beneath the surface. We are so repelled by the effects of racism, by the ways it shows up in society, that we never develop the lens or language to interrogate the allegedly self-evident, "commonsense" values and beliefs that perpetuate race-based inequality.

Speaking from my own experience, I needed a long time to grasp how racism was different from prejudice or bias. I thought they were all just different words with the same meaning. The idea that racism is prejudice or bias enacted by someone who holds or is backed by the power of a system that advantages whites

and disadvantages Blacks struck me as a bit far-fetched and over-the-top. I mean, come on now. People being racist I could get with, but an institution? A system? An entire society? How could inanimate objects be racist anyway? They require people to give them life, and if the people within them aren't prejudiced, then how could an institution or system be? Furthermore, a racist institution, system, or society would depend on lots of people—millions—who have never even met in some instances, let alone agreed to perpetuate discrimination, acting in conscious coordination.

*As you can see, I was overthinking it.*

Let's get to the brass tacks. The dominant group decides what its society will reward and what it will condemn. The systems within the society adopt and codify those beliefs and values into laws. Institutions within a given system turn those laws into policies and practices. People working within institutions carry out those policies and practices. In that way, we are complicit with the status quo whether we choose to accept that or not.

Ironically, I started to learn how systemic racism works the weekend before my last year of law school began. I had just returned from a monthlong backpacking tour of Europe with my best friend, Derek,



a white guy I'd met on a basketball court in college but bonded with over blunts, bongos, and boxed wine. For me, the trip was a wistful goodbye to youth. I'd taken the Eurail from Paris to Amsterdam, bunked in a seedy youth hostel in Barcelona, and enjoyed a seventy-two-hour romance in Madrid with a woman from Australia. Once third year began, the party was over. I was ready to focus on graduation and getting a job. . . so you can imagine how disorienting it must have felt to find myself handcuffed in the back seat of a squad car the Friday before school began.

How did I wind up in the back seat of a squad car? Good question. I was standing on a corner with my roommate, also a largish Black male third-year, who had just returned a pair of DVDs to Blockbuster. We were figuring out our dinner plan when he grabbed the construction scaffold above our heads and did a pull-up. Maybe two. By the time he came down, a cop car had parked in front of us. The passenger-side door sprang ajar.



*“Down on your knees, hands behind your neck!”*

It's worth noting that I had just studied criminal procedure and constitutional law the previous semester. I asked what law I had broken. The cop didn't answer. Instead, she called for backup. Within what felt like mere seconds, four more cars arrived on the scene. I can't tell you exactly how my roommate and I were separated, but I remember being beaten in

an alley. I remember being dragged to my feet and handcuffed. Being tossed into a police car like a bag of old clothes bound for Goodwill. While I gathered myself, I glimpsed several dazed white couples out on Friday-night dinner dates. They weren't paying attention to me, though. I followed their gawking eyes. My roommate was surrounded by club-swinging cops. His arms were raised above his head to block the blows. He wasn't fighting back but he wasn't going down. Finally, a pair of cops tackled his waist and tipped him over. The others piled on. When my friend emerged, he was bloodied and bleary-eyed.

Friday night in a jail cell passed without food or a phone call. The next morning guards woke us up for our arraignment, but when it came time to leave, my friend and I were instead taken to a hospital for treatment of our various bruises and placed in another cell, where we again waited hours without food or water. We never saw a doctor, but we did deduce that we were being held purposefully and likely because someone had figured out that we were law students.

Back at the jail that afternoon, I again asked for and was denied food and water. When I asked for my phone call, I was flat out ignored. The longer I sat in the

cell, the foggier everything—the exhilarating freedom I had just experienced in Europe and the bright future I thought lay before me—became. Finally, on Tuesday morning we were herded alongside two dozen other men onto a van. There were no windows, so we couldn't know where we were being driven, though I am certain many of my fellow passengers had taken this ride before. At our final destination, the van parked and the back door swung open. We were ordered to stand up and file out one by one onto a ramp that led directly into a panoptic holding pen in the middle of a wide and open space reminiscent of a vacant warehouse. A hundred or so men who had been arrested over the weekend met the new arrivals with nods, stares, or not all. Men, some hungover or in the early stages of withdrawal, picked fights, pounded their fists on the bars, and mumbled their jumbled thoughts to themselves. Among us captives, a white or Hispanic man lingered here and there, but the vast, vast majority of us were young and Black—me. Among the heavily armed guards the opposite was the case.

Later, after we were herded into a cluster of smaller cells beneath the courtroom, I met with my court-appointed lawyer, also a white man. He read my file and told me that I was being charged with assaulting an officer. The charge carried time—between six months and ten years. My court date would be in the



late fall. As the attorney advised me of my options, I started to drift. My nightmare was just beginning.

*That night I called my dad. The line went quiet when I broke the news to him. Never a yeller, my old man expressed his greatest disappointments with the cruelty of curtness and silence.*

For a few days thereafter I walked around thinking I had once again let him down. Then one of his signature, typed letters arrived in the mail. In his way, my dad apologized if he had given me the impression that I was to blame for what had happened to me. “I momentarily lapsed into the belief that we have control over the events that occur in our lives, that we can somehow shape our reality by our behavior,” he wrote in a line that still resonates twenty years later, more than fifteen after brain cancer took him from us.

After the letter, my dad secured a defense attorney for me. In our first conversation, I laid out the photos of my bruises and passionately retold the injustices I had endured. My attorney let me go on a while before stopping me. This was serious. The law didn't care if I had been profiled. It wasn't interested in my legal interpretation of my rights. It was my word against the police before a judge who was duty bound to have more faith in the officer's word than that of some Black kid who thought he had rights anyone needed to respect. The best I could hope for, my lawyer told me, was a misdemeanor plea option that would keep me out of jail and come off my record after a period of time. So, as my third year in law school began, I entered the unknown. Was I



going to graduate? Would I even be able to take the bar? I went to class every day not knowing what my life would look like the following year. I couldn't make plans, couldn't process the job search. All I could do was not drop out. My dad flew back from California to join me in court for the trial. As we had a few years earlier when I faced a charge at Rutgers, we drove to the courthouse together. Our lawyer met us on the steps outside the main entrance, and together we passed through security and glided up the escalator to the floor on which our courtroom sat. While my dad and I looked for seats, my lawyer conferred with the prosecutor. Within a few minutes, my lawyer returned holding a document containing a conditional offer: all charges dropped as long as I stayed out of trouble for a year. My record would remain clean. No one would ever know the arrest had taken place. A bitter streak shot through me.

*I had waited months to face this lying, petty, vindictive SOB who thought of throwing away my life out of spite. Signing meant I wouldn't get the vindication I longed for.*

I wouldn't get to tell the cop that what she did was wrong. The system would

shield her from accountability for what she had done. My roommate, my lawyer said, wasn't signing. He was fighting on. A wrong had been done to him, to us, and he couldn't stand idly by. Over the months that followed, I watched the fight take a toll on my roommate.

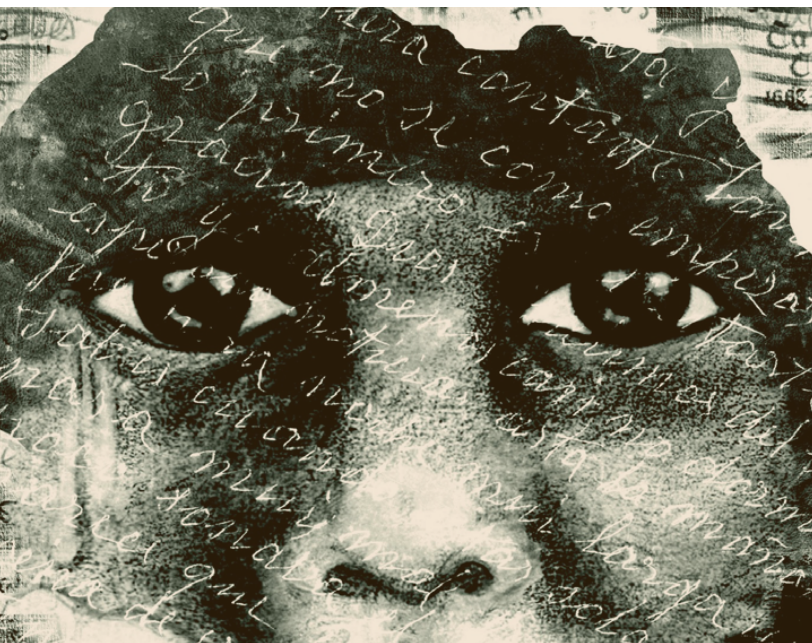
*Although we agreed to avoid talking about his trial, I couldn't help but notice when he began exhibiting signs of an emerging mental health condition that would eventually result in his own mother institutionalizing him for a period.*

He started sleeping all day, missing classes and failing to complete assignments. When he was awake, he'd look out of our living room window for hours without saying a word. I eventually moved out when our living arrangement became untenable. By late spring we'd lost contact. Before I left for New York that fall, a mutual friend shared that he didn't graduate with their class. A decade later I visited my friend in his hometown. He was living in subsidized housing, hadn't held gainful employment in years and refused to use money, calling it "fiat currency." He spent his days reading out of a worn suitcase full of religious texts and drawing elaborate plans for an ashram where he could spread spiritual



enlightenment. It's impossible for me to say what happened to him but I know with certainty that he became a different person after the police beating.

At the time, I respected my roommate's choice, admired it, if I'm being honest. But our ordeal had brought me face-to-face with a system that held the indiscriminate power to completely upend my life. I wasn't about to stand trial on principle now that I was being offered the opportunity to put it all behind me. Nor was I about to put my fate in the hands of a system that had, for a second time, so casually tossed my life into turmoil. I knew full well that if I rejected the leniency I was being offered, the system would punish me at trial. So I signed the papers as quickly



as I could. Then I swore to my dad that I would do everything in my power to stay out of legal trouble.

On the way out of the courthouse, I counted one Black male after another after another. It occurred to me that we were the coal, the cattle, the cotton—whatever commodity that had once powered this economy—we were part of it now. All the clerks, guards, bailiffs, prosecutors, defense attorneys—even the shoeshine guy—fed their families off our misfortune. Even if the system wasn't designed to feed on Black people, that's what it was doing, and no one seemed the least bit

concerned. Whatever doubts I harbored about my decision vanished as we emerged onto the street.

*After that, I couldn't unsee the system around me.*

I had been snatched up by a police officer who knew she had the protection of the law and the backing of the justice system. She used a system that was already well versed in controlling Black bodies to enact racially motivated violence against us. She used the penal code's presumption of her trustworthiness and integrity to violate her oath because she knew she could get away with it. We were just a pair of young Black men. No one would believe us. Yet, take away the badges worn by the dozen officers who clubbed us and we have all of the elements of a hate crime.

Tell me, do you think that as a young white male you would have received the same treatment? Would the cops have even noticed you and your law school buddy fooling around on a street corner? Do the images and ideas about you that live in the public consciousness pose such a threat that the people paid to protect and serve would order you to your knees without a shred of evidence that a crime had taken

place? Do you think four more squad cars would have been on the scene as quickly if the dispatcher had said "two Caucasian males" instead of "two Black males"? Would they have wielded their batons as confidently in broad daylight if it were your body's abuse holding the shocked gaze of while onlookers?

What pains me so much about Breonna Taylor's death is that we all know that but for her race, she would still be alive. Rationalizing the judge's decision to grant the cops a no-knock warrant is not helpful. Her ex-boyfriend's suspected underworld ties didn't justify a middle-of-the-night raid on her home. Withholding the grand jury transcripts is purely about protecting a white power structure at the expense of Black pain and suffering.

If Breonna were white, the judge wouldn't have approved a rubber-stamp warrant to a home miles from the cluster under suspicion without some actual proof of her involvement in the conspiracy. If she were white, the cops would have surrounded the house, got on a megaphone, and asked her to come out with her hands up. If she were white, they would not have taken down her door with a battering ram in the middle of the night. We have to accept this as shared truth if we have any expectation of our actions amounting to change.



**Dax-Devlon Ross** has led a career as an educator, non-profit executive, equity consultant and journalist with a focus on social justice. After receiving his Juris Doctorate from George Washington University, he joined New York City Teaching Fellows where he taught in middle and high schools in Brooklyn and Manhattan. He later helped lead the national training and replication team at the Posse Foundation, one of the country's foremost college access organizations. During his tenure at Bank Street College of Education, he managed the school's partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service. [dax-dev.com](http://dax-dev.com)

### Catch Dax in conversation at this year's SummerFest



[youtube.com/watch?v=uQNU4zyVDNE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=uQNU4zyVDNE)

### See Dax on the 1455 Author Series



[youtube.com/watch?v=VHNjchA17pk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=VHNjchA17pk)

*Excerpt from*

# Off Our Chests:

## A Candid Tour Through the World of Cancer

Dr. John and Liza Marshall



*A couple writing a book together may sound like a train wreck. But this couple is no stranger to wrecks – consider the oncologist husband, who long declared his resentment of the “breast cancer machine,” with its outsized financial and PR success compared to that of the much-less-successful-by-all-measures gastrointestinal cancers he treated, confronted by his wife’s treachery in contracting breast cancer. That’s more like a*

*40-car pileup on the interstate. But it turns out that a sudden and shocking jolt to a marriage can create space for learning, empathy, growth, and love (with a side of physician burnout). Our hope is that this book reveals truths, prompts some laughter - as well as a few cathartic tears - and gives anyone going through any type of major life event a window into what might be to come.*

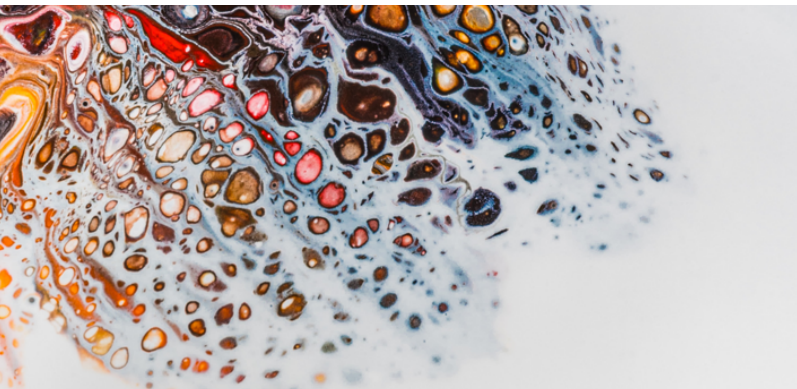
but this year we changed our plans and stayed home. We invited my parents and sister, Lucy, as well as Dr. Claudine Isaacs and her family for Thanksgiving dinner. Claudine is a breast oncologist at Georgetown Hospital and a friend of ours since she and John did their oncology fellowship together at Georgetown in the early 1990s. It was going to be a hectic week as we prepared to feed eleven people what we hoped would be a gourmet feast.

When I woke up Monday morning, my major focus was on logistics and figuring out the answer to the question: How was I going to get it all done? I got the kids to school and came home to try to clean things up before heading back to supervise the Thanksgiving pie distribution, a school fundraiser I had organized that year.

**Liza:** Thanksgiving week of 2006 came with its usual flurry of school and family activity. The regular routine involving Thanksgiving pies pickup on Monday, Grandparents and Special Friends Day on Tuesday, and then no school on Wednesday, every mother’s dream as she schedules the shopping, cooking, and other preparations for the big event on Thursday. We usually went to Kentucky for Thanksgiving to see John’s family,

John called mid-morning to go over the logistics for the evening, getting one child to basketball practice and another to a piano lesson, fixing dinner, feeding the dog, purchasing the groceries for Thursday’s meal. As we chatted, he became distracted by a colleague entering his office. “Dr. Liu is coming into my office. What can I do for you, Dr. Liu?” he said cheerfully. I glanced at my computer, quickly scanning incoming e-mails while his attention was elsewhere, assuming he and Dr. Liu had some business to transact.





*“You have breast cancer,” I heard my husband the oncologist say.*

His voice was incredulous, choked. I jolted back to attention. “You’re kidding,” I said. Not a very funny joke, but John likes to push the envelope and say shocking things to people to get a laugh. Sometimes they fall flat; this one was falling flat. Then I heard him talking to Dr. Liu in the background and asking what she was showing him. “No, I’m not,” he continued. “Minetta just handed me the pathology report from that breast tissue specimen research you did, and it shows cancer cells in your lymph system.” I really couldn’t process this. Dr. Liu wasn’t my doctor. She was a colleague of John’s, a breast oncologist at Lombardi Cancer Center. I knew her socially from work events, but I had no idea why she would be appearing in John’s office in the middle of a workday to tell him I had breast cancer.

**John:** My least favorite part of my job is giving bad news. It could be a bad scan showing that the cancer is back, and death is certain. It could be that we have no more treatment options, hope is running dry, and it’s time for hospice. The worst for me, fortunately rare as some other poor doctor typically has broken the bad news, is to tell someone who is praying with all their might that the biopsy was benign that, in fact, it was malignant. For many, I will deliver the worst news they will ever hear.

First, you see the patient’s eyes go blank, their thoughts sunk deep inside, no longer hearing what you are saying. Finally, recognizing my failure to communicate, I stop talking altogether, waiting for the patient to resurface. After a minute or two, the eyes clear, and the patient is back—shocked, full of disbelief and questions. Tears appear, and the patient is afraid even to glance at the spouse. The spouse is doing everything to be strong. Simultaneously, they get brave enough to look at each other. You see life-changing shock, pain, fear, sadness, denial.

*For sure, I did not want to be the messenger, but even more, I really did not want to look Liza in the eye.*

Out of necessity, I am a creature of habit. To maintain all the moving parts of a busy cancer practice and research career, I set aside time first thing after I arrive at the office every day to stop, review, and organize. I am focused, awake, clear, and undistracted. In 2006,

electronic medical records were not so ubiquitous, and CT scans, biopsy results, letters from other docs, and orders to sign came to me by fax or mail. I would flip through the new stack: last night’s faxes, the end-of-the-day dump that I didn’t review the night before. I efficiently sort through the reports, sign off on any orders, review my schedule for the day, and treat myself to my one cup of doctor’s lounge coffee. Once done, it’s showtime!

I am supposed to receive results only on my patients. Getting records on other doctors’ patients is technically a privacy HIPAA violation. But on this particular Monday, I came across a pathology report positive for breast cancer. I don’t do breast cancer. I looked down to the bottom. There was my name. For some reason, I had been copied to receive the report. I looked at the top for the name of the patient. My heart stopped. The image of Liza’s dimpled breast returned. I looked again at the path report, the name, the summary diagnosis. There must be a mistake.

Catch John & Liza’s discussion at this year’s SummerFest



[youtube.com/watch?v=xYrha3Fihxl](https://youtube.com/watch?v=xYrha3Fihxl)



**Dr. John Marshall** is a medical oncologist and a professor at Georgetown University, and he is an internationally recognized expert in gastrointestinal cancers and the development of new treatments for cancer. He has been outspoken on controversial issues in cancer research, including his criticism of the dominance and success of breast cancer advocacy and research at the unfortunate expense of other specialties. partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service.



**Liza Marshall** left practice as a communications attorney in 2005 to channel her talents and energy into her family and her growing role at Hope Connections for Cancer Support, of which she is a founding member. In 2006, at the age of forty-three, Liza was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer, the most deadly form of the disease. Throughout her treatment and beyond, Liza has been an active volunteer at Hope Connections and other local non-profits, serving on boards, directing development campaigns, and supporting a variety of communities and missions.



# They Grow Up So Fast

Holly Smith

*If writing a novel is akin to giving birth, having that novel optioned for the screen is like dropping the baby off at the airport and handing her a one-way ticket to you're not quite sure where.*

By the time you see her again, she's all grown up and has a weird tattoo.

At least, that's the sense I got while moderating the "Adaptation Nation" panel at this year's 1455 Summer Festival. While novelists Lou Bayard, Angie Kim, Julie Langsdorf, and Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney are all at different points in the book-optioning journey, they agreed that letting go is part of the process. Once somebody decides to adapt your work, you need to step aside.

As one panelist put it during our lively conversation, after a book is optioned, the

author goes from being its parent to its grandparent: still deeply in love with it, but no longer responsible for its care and feeding.

But isn't that always the case with storytelling? When you share a tale — or a poem or a play or a novel — with the world, it ceases to be wholly yours. Sure, you birthed it, but you're giving it away to others. How they interpret and absorb it is out of your hands.

*In a perfect world, of course, they'll come to adore it as much as you do.*

Watch the recording of "Adaptation Nation"  
[youtube.com/watch?v=yi24LMs6WQI](https://youtube.com/watch?v=yi24LMs6WQI)



**Holly Smith** is is editor-in-chief of the *Washington Independent Review of Books*, as well as a college lecturer, award-winning freelance writer/editor, and co-author of *Seafood Lover's Chesapeake Bay*. Her work has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *CNBC.com*, *USA Today Travel's 10Best*, *More Mirth of a Nation*, *Salon*, *Not What I Expected*, *Washington Flyer*, *Brain, Child*, and many other publications. She earned a master's degree in creative nonfiction from Johns Hopkins and often wonders what the university would pay her not to put an "alumni" sticker on her 1999 Dodge Neon.

# Seeing the World Through Fiction

Clifford Garstang

*In my workshop during the 1455 Summer Literary Festival in 2021, I spoke about “Seeing the World Through Fiction.”*

This was partly a craft talk about the advantages and challenges of setting a story or novel in an exotic location and partly an opportunity to talk about my own work and methods, particularly my recently published novel, *Oliver’s Travels*.

But also, the more I thought about the subject, it was a commentary on two

important aspects of storytelling, because how you tell a story matters as much as the story you’ve chosen to tell.

It is common for writers to draw on their own experiences when writing fiction, and that’s certainly true about many novels set in countries other than the writer’s own. I spoke during the workshop about



a wonderful novel, *Florence in Ecstasy*, by Jessie Chaffee, that is set in Florence, Italy, a city the author knows well from time she spent there as a student and later as a Fulbright Scholar. I also talked about *Disappearing Earth* by Julia Phillips, set in Kamchatka, Russia, which is about questions of globalization affecting the people of that region, a subject the author researched during her own Fulbright time in Moscow. While Chaffee’s novel is about an American in Italy and Phillips’s is about Russians and the indigenous people of northeastern Russia, both novels benefit from the familiarity the authors have with their subject matter and setting, and both told stories that were compassionate and sensitive. Both were very effective.

*The lesson for storytellers here, I think, is that an author has an obligation to get the facts right, regardless of the setting. Whether the story being told is realistic or speculative, readers crave authenticity, and the quickest way to lose the reader is to get the details wrong.*

I also talked about a novel set outside the U.S. that was praised for its vibrancy and pacing—another aspect of storytelling to keep in mind—but was also criticized for



its errors and the stereotypes on which the characters were built. This wasn't just a question of authenticity, but the author seemed to have failed to tell the story with the sensitivity that it called for especially when writing outside of personal experience. The culture being written about was not the author's own, and

apparently the work to really understand the culture was not done.

In my own writing, in which for the most part I write from the point of view of Americans (although not exclusively), I focus on places I know well. In my novel, *The Shaman of Turtle Valley*, part of the story takes place in South Korea, where I lived for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer and have visited frequently since, and deals with an American man in a relationship with a Korean woman. While I knew I had the details right, I wanted to ensure that I was not being insensitive to Korean culture, and I believe my work was improved with the help of a reader of my manuscript who brought a knowledgeable perspective to the story I was telling. My new novel, *Oliver's Travels*, deals primarily with interactions among Americans, but in a variety of settings around the world, all of which I know well from my personal work and travel.

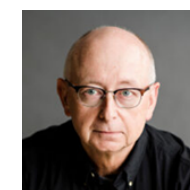
*I believe I was able write about these locations with authenticity and credibility because of that experience.*

These, then, are the lessons I drew about storytelling. In order to establish and maintain the reader's trust, the author needs to get the details right, whether through personal experience or research. And a story that fails to take cultural sensitivity into account, whether through appropriation or other missteps, also risks losing the reader.

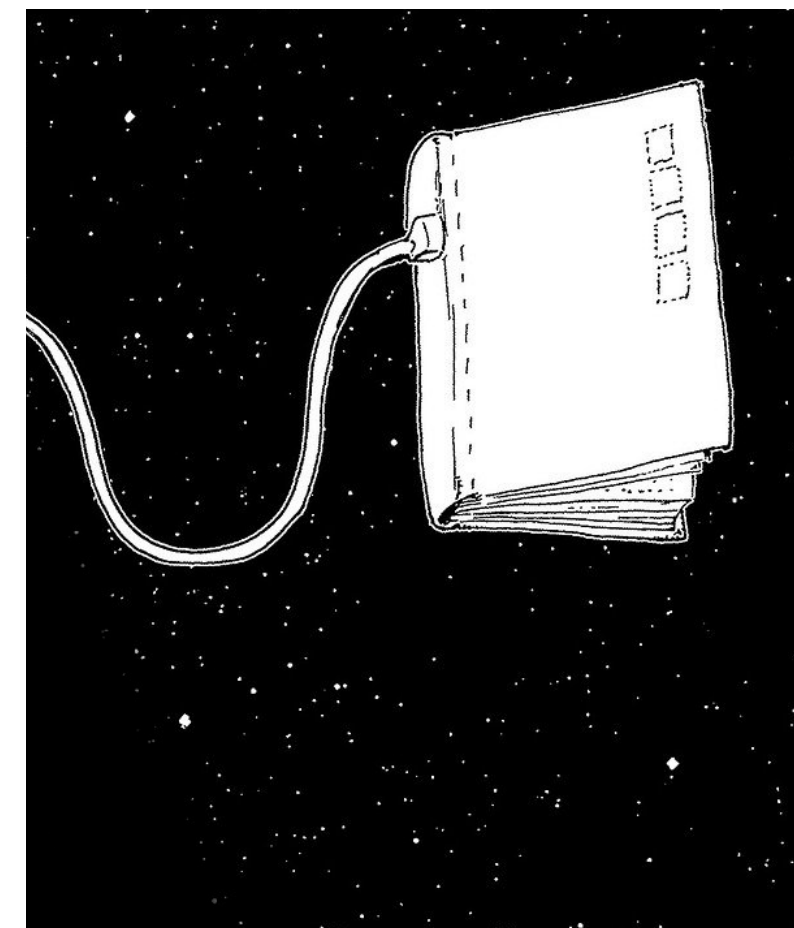
### Watch Clifford's Recording at SummerFest



[youtube.com/watch?v=vtbq18WUdVE](https://youtube.com/watch?v=vtbq18WUdVE)



**Clifford Garstang** is the author of five works of fiction including the novels *Oliver's Travels* and *The Shaman of Turtle Valley* and the short story collections *House of the Ancients and Other Stories*, *What the Zhang Boys Know*, and *In an Uncharted Country*. He is also the editor of the acclaimed anthology series, *Everywhere Stories: Short Fiction from a Small Planet*. A former international lawyer, he lives in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.



# Storytelling, Memory, and the Island of my Heart

Heather Frese

*My littlest child pedals his bike and I steer him down the slight incline toward the Cape Fear River, crape myrtles blossoming pink above our heads, cicadas whirring their summer song.*



It's humid and hot and so very picturesque; this lovely little town near the sea regularly draws film crews for movies and TV. And yet, walking along the river with my little boy, I feel mildly lonely, a little bit sad, nostalgic for something I can't pinpoint. And then I see one of those kitschy signs with various destinations and mileage—you know, like, Cape Cod 877 miles thataway—and the top sign says Cape Hatteras and points north, and that's it, the yearning vagueness of my slight discontent crystallizes and it's because I miss Hatteras, and because this place is similar to but not Hatteras, and because Hatteras holds the stories of my life, the ones I tell my children, the stories I want them to hold dear, the stories that bind someone to a place so that memory and location intermingle like a night sky spread with stars, reliant on one another for existence.

The Outer Banks are sparkling with stories, and my time vacationing there as a child solidified my love of narrative. Every summer my family would drive the fourteen hours from Ohio to Hatteras Island, towing

our pop-up tent camper behind us. We'd pack the benches of that little camper full of books, so I always associate Hatteras with reading. Then there were the campfire stories I learned when I was small, the lost colonies, beheaded pirates, the ghosts and shipwrecks and hurricanes and rescues at sea. Every summer I'd read Hatteras history in the little free newspapers stocked in grocery stores and restaurants, soaking in the stories of the island. I bought my own set of books of Outer Banks legends and read them over and over when I got back home.

My time as a child on Hatteras holds smaller, more personal, family storytelling, too, the little adventures we had that we'd laugh about through the years. The time my dad ate too many bowls of all-you-can-eat scallops and pulled the van over to the side of Highway 12 to, let's just say, release, the scallops, while my brother stuck his head out the window to repeatedly ask what he was doing. The time he

went hang gliding, the time he sailed a catamaran a bit too far out to sea. The way he'd get drunk on box wine and tell us stories about Vietnam, something he never talked about. I'm mentioning my dad a lot because he's died, and stories of our Hatteras trips are bright, touchstone memories.

And then there're the stories the place can tell itself, the way the shifting sand and splices of storm-induced inlets tell the changing nature of life that drew me to set my fiction on the Outer Banks from the time I started seriously writing. In my novel, *The Baddest Girl on the Planet*, my protagonist, Evie Austin, is a born and raised Hatteras islander. In one chapter,

set in 1999, her parents are separating during the summer the Cape Hatteras lighthouse gets moved inland. It's both a plot point (Evie's mom is boinking a lighthouse-mover) and an extended metaphor, this lighthouse that represents safety and security, plucked up and moved.

*And so, storytelling and this island of my heart are all bundled up together in my mind.*

Is it any wonder I'm sad when we go to another beach? Sometimes my parents would float the idea of going somewhere different on vacation and I would be fine with that, if we went to Hatteras, too. It seemed inconceivable to miss a year of the stories I'd gather. I lived on Hatteras for a year, as a newlywed, and the story of my first child's birth happens in the pretty, yellow, Outer Banks Hospital. We didn't stay, the storms and isolation and seasonal employment chasing us inland but leaving the story of my life even more deeply entrenched in the sand. Maybe I must keep taking my little kids back, keep connecting them with my family's stories. We live in central North Carolina now, and it's tantalizingly easy to pop down to

the southern beaches for a quick trip rather than make the drive to Hatteras. So, I have adventures with my kids here, walking along the Cape Fear, playing in the waves at Oak Island, and it's good. These are new stories, ones they'll carry with them. But all the while I'm planning the next time I can take them to Hatteras, so they can write their own stories there to intertwine with mine. Only 313 miles thattaway.



**Heather Frese** is the author of the novel *The Baddest Girl on the Planet*, winner of the Lee Smith Novel Prize. She has published numerous short stories, essays, and the occasional poem. Her work has appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, the *Los Angeles Review*, *Front Porch*, the *Barely South Review*, *Switchback*, and elsewhere, earning notable mention in the *Pushcart Prize Anthology* and *Best American Essays*. Heather received her M.F.A. from West Virginia University and has a master's degree from Ohio University. @Heatherkfrese.



**Catch Heather on "Keep the Stories Coming: Exciting Debut Novels Published During COVID"**

[youtube.com/watch?v=FNvVW7gmru40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNvVW7gmru40)



# An Essay and a Poem

Krystle May Statler

*Weeks after my brother was killed, I read a quote by Jessica Handler: “No tears for the writer, no tears for the reader.”*

I knew about the power of storytelling in my life-before-murder and this quote gifted me permission to lean into my truths about this new life-after. I learned quickly there was no sense in trying to hide from my stories of grief; they will be within and around me for the rest of my days, just like the love I hold for my

brother. In sharing my stories, I've been told I'm brave — inspirational even. My brother is dead. I don't feel brave, I don't feel inspirational. I feel absence. I feel rage. I feel love. And, if I don't tell these stories, how else will I keep him alive?

## Dismissed

In July 2020, the inferno of murders by police and White supremacists blazed. Reluctantly, I logged into the monthly Zoom of a volunteer organization, unsure if there'd be an acknowledgement of this ongoing reality or if it'd be business as usual. The icebreaker was routine: name, pronouns, tenure, and a reply to “How are you impacting the world today?” White women shared how they're allowing people to tell their stories, how they didn't know this was going on, how they will donate more.

When called on, I replied, “Krystle, she/her, three years.” I let out a deep breath, hesitated, “Since my brother BJ's murder last year by Inglewood Police, I'm saying his name, suing for accountability, and sharing that he was so much more than a hashtag.” I pressed mute before I broke. My hands became glaciers. A burst of grief bubbled under the surface.

Seconds later, a White woman shared, “Kim, she/her, fifteen years. I'm impacting the world by reminding us that not all cops are bad. In fact, many more are good than bad. Last night, the police visited my home at 4am after my alarm went off and were nice and pleasant.”

The internet connection was stable. I was frozen. The grief ruptured, rendering me voiceless. With the power dynamics against me as one of only two Black women amongst the twenty White women, Kim's statement reverberated with a collective silence. My vulnerability hung without safety.

The other Black woman unmuted, “Krystle, I am so sorry.” As her sobs continued, “Kim, I'd love a conversation to explain how hurtful your words were, how you rejected Krystle's and others' very traumatic realities with your non-fearing positivity.”

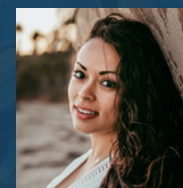
## Set adrift on memory

Kim didn't make eye contact with the screen as her privilege oozed.

Weeks later, I received an envelope in the mail. Kim wrote, "I was saddened when it was brought to my attention that what I said hurt you. Please know my comments weren't intended to be hurtful."

The wound of living in a world that belittles his murder and presumes his life inconsequential, throbs unconditionally — like the rattle in my voice as I say his name, the love in my heart that keeps him alive, and the fight in my soul for his justice.

Set before me are the stones I cradle when feeling adrift from this body, when grief latches on (as in hair thinning, as in insomnia). The memory of life before was one filled with bliss and hope, like when we were a family of four in the cool Tehachapi mountains where you led the sled along the crystals and Dad called me Baby girl (as in only daughter). Proud to be a big brother, you shared your toys and kisses. I'd send my love in coos and drools as if you and me would stay kids forever.



**Krystle May Statler** (she/her) is a Black multiracial artist living in Los Angeles and received her MFA from Otis College of Art & Design. She's a co-founding editor for every other, a Los Angeles-based collective that publishes literary broadsides by writers from around the world. Her painting "Trigger Fingers, 2019" was featured in the BLMLA x Museum of Social Justice exhibit, *New Black City: A World Without Police* in May 2021. Her poems are featured in *The Santa Fe Writers Project Quarterly*, *Cultural Weekly* or are forthcoming. Her debut poetic-visual hybrid is a finalist for the 2021 CAAPP Book Prize. [krystlemaystatler.com](http://krystlemaystatler.com)



See Krystle in the panel  
"Inspiration Information:  
Black Women Poets"

[youtube.com/watch?v=tPE1cmohrjM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=tPE1cmohrjM)



# Poems

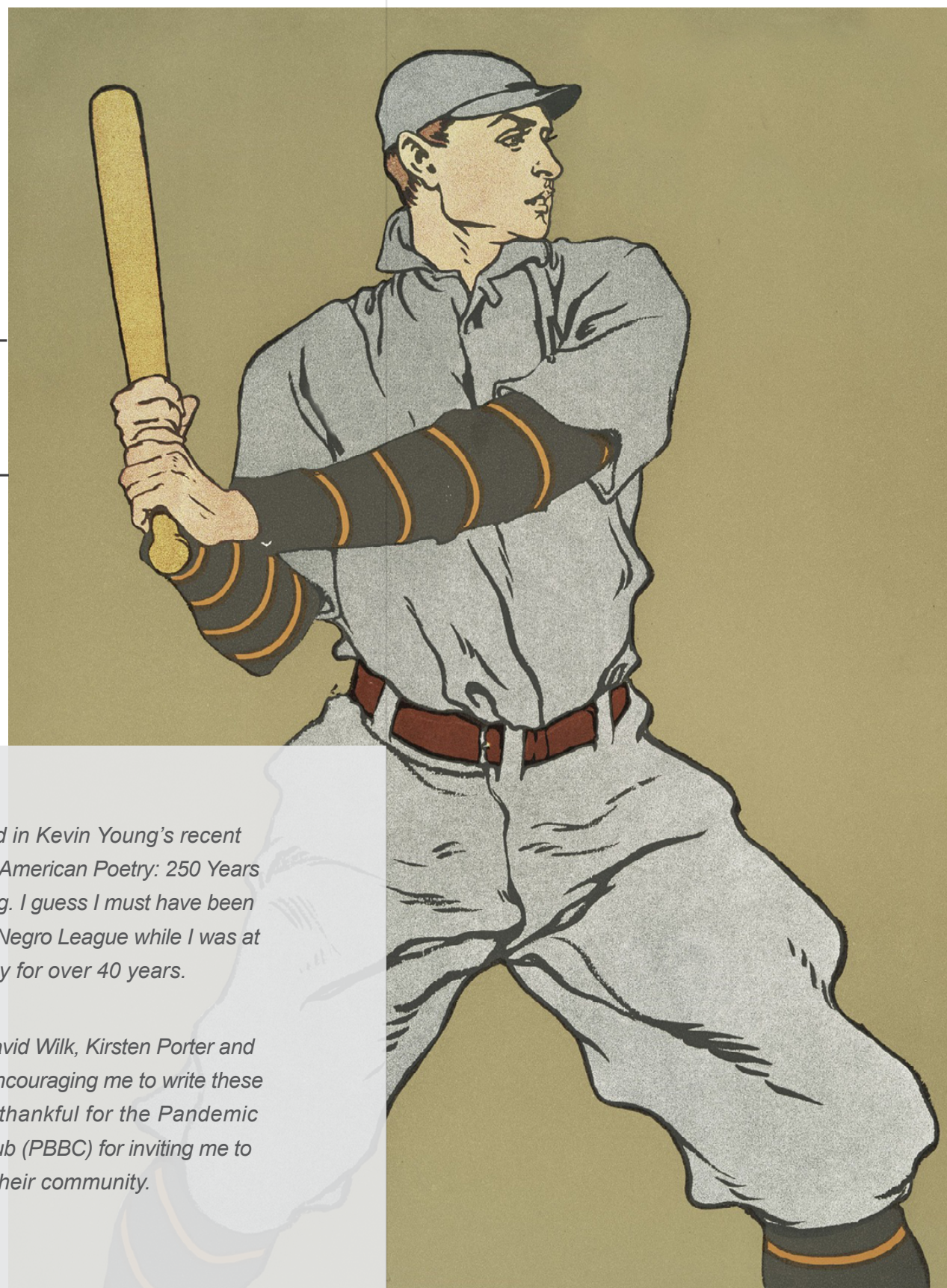
E. Ethelbert Miller

*The five poems presented here will be including in the third volume of my baseball poetry trilogy.*

*There is a point in a pitcher's career when one becomes a pitcher and not simply a thrower. The poems here capture my growth and range when it comes to writing about baseball as well as using baseball as a metaphor for whatever life throws at us. I continue to explore and write about individuals who were important to the game. My baseball trilogy will hopefully define my place in American letters. I'm very much aware that the African American literary community has grown and it's very easy to be overlooked. For example, one will not find*

*my voice included in Kevin Young's recent anthology African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song. I guess I must have been playing in the old Negro League while I was at Howard University for over 40 years.*

*I have to thank David Wilk, Kirsten Porter and Emily Rutter for encouraging me to write these poems. I'm also thankful for the Pandemic Baseball Book Club (PBBC) for inviting me to be a member of their community.*



## *It's Either Baseball or Free Jazz*

Today I ran into Don Cherry.  
He had a pocket trumpet in one pocket  
and a baseball in the other.  
He reminded me that I should be practicing  
more. When I write I tend to bounce words  
off walls instead of off the floor like Pollock.

Cherry once played catch with Coltrane  
in that Avant Garde park around 1966.  
The same year the Orioles swept the Dodgers  
in the World Series and we all thought  
it was too much Charlie Haden on bass.

## *Jimmy Piersall (1929-2017)*

Maybe I have fans or just my dad in my head.  
What's the difference between being bipolar  
and warming up two relievers in the bullpen?  
One right. One left.

I love baseball. Sometimes it's a crazy game.  
I once had six hits in one.  
That day I felt I could never strike out.

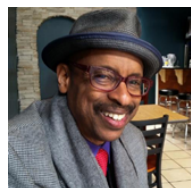
I only had a fear of failing and falling again.

## Joe DiMaggio (for M)

After just a few years of marriage  
we both went hitless and decided to divorce.  
It was desirable for both of us.

We met at Howard and were together  
almost every day we were on campus.  
It was a streak we knew one day would end.

Now in our 7th inning we meet outside  
a downtown metro station.  
I feel like Joe DiMaggio walking  
with Marilyn Monroe.



**E. Ethelbert Miller**, full name Eugene Ethelbert Miller, is an African-American poet, teacher and literary activist, based in Washington, DC. He is the author of several collections of poetry and two memoirs, the editor of *Poet Lore* magazine, and the host of the weekly WPFW morning radio show *On the Margin*.

## Yoga

In the early sixties we were young  
boys without yoga mats. We had yet to read  
Kerouac or Ginsberg. We thought Zen  
was a soft drink. We lost our balance  
when we tried to be Juan Marichal  
or Warren Spahn. We wanted to kick  
the stars in the mouth and chase the moon.  
We kicked high and threw hard.  
If only our parents could afford spikes.  
We wanted to be All-Star pitchers  
in a league of our own. We went to bed  
early in search of dreams and meditation.

### See Ethelbert at SummerFest



[youtube.com/watch?v=gBbfhBF7bQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBbfhBF7bQ)

### An Interview with Ethelbert



[youtube.com/watch?v=-FkgsKPOeGA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FkgsKPOeGA)

# The cherry tree was taken by lightning

Jessi Lewis



**Jessi Lewis** grew up on a blueberry farm in rural Virginia. Her short stories, essays and poems have been published in *Oxford American*, *Carve*, *Sonora Review*, *The Pinch*, *Yemassee* and *Appalachian Heritage*, among others. *Oxford American* chose her short story, "False Morels," as the 2018 Debut Fiction Winner. Her short story in *The Hopkins Review*, "Daria's Knives" received an honorable mention in *Best American Short Stories*, 2020. Her novel manuscript was a finalist for the PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction.

See Jessi moderating "Keep the Stories Coming," at SummerFest

[youtube.com/watch?v=FNWV7gmrU40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNWV7gmrU40)

At night, I can't produce a word  
As long as the tree frogs show more interest  
In the dining room light than the darkness.

Their throats drum in unison.

By noon, summer is waiting  
For storms as visiting cousins.  
Bursts and voices.

Humidity reclines, patient.

If there's something that returns words  
To me in porous memory,

It's the titles  
The hawk delivers over  
June bug flights, crashing.  
I walk past in dust, wagon road underfoot.

Then, by three, there I am, holding a  
Metal broomstick, tight in the palm,  
Knuckles sharp.

The rusted end writes  
On the concrete of the creek bridge.

This is the chance, the very second of  
Clouds drawing closer,  
The broken air, the crack, the burst,  
A start, then a word, and an ending.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Greetings, creative tribe --

In this issue of Movable Type, we're celebrating this year's Summer Fest for just a little longer by highlighting its theme of Storytelling. Our 2021 Storyteller of the Year, activist and journalist Lisa Ling, mentions "the transformative power of storytelling" in her acceptance, and I'd like to share a story about transformation with you here. It's one that I've told in a different form before, but I'll keep it brief.

Years ago I found myself with the opportunity to go to graduate school. I could choose any kind of humanities program, anywhere in the United States, without financial concerns. That's a choice few people get, and I wanted to choose wisely.

I quickly eliminated going for an MBA, but law school beckoned. I took the LSAT and started thinking about which programs might best suit my creative bent. A JD degree made sense; I'd never have to worry about finding some kind of work if I were an attorney.

But one day I found myself on the phone with a friend from college and waxing enthusiastic about a novel I was finishing. When I finally stopped talking, she paused and said: "I think you should get a degree that lets you talk about books as much as possible, because that's clearly what you love most."

Her words galvanized me to take the GRE in English literature and apply to master's programs in the same. I thought I'd be pursuing a doctorate in the same, too, but that was not to be. As I held my diploma in front of my second-trimester pregnant stomach, I figured I had missed my chance to work with books and literature.

Many things happened between that graduation day and now, when I address you as the editorial director of this magazine for writers, things good and bad, in fits and starts, with many many many mistakes along the way. The story of my actual career path is a story for another time and place.

Here I want to tell you just this: The power of storytelling never lost its hold on me. I leaned into it, hard, whether I was reading to my daughters, devouring books on my own, or telling other people about books I felt shared unusual perspectives on the world. Every door that opened onto opportunities to write and talk about books, I stepped through.

Slowly, the stories I read and shared transformed me. Or maybe I am, because all of the narratives I've taken in have changed how I look at myself and my own story. As I tried and succeeded, tried and failed, I learned enough about myself to realize I had a serious form of depression that needed to be addressed and treated if I were going to live the life I wanted to live, which for me meant appreciating my resources, family, and opportunities.

Each of us has many things we can't control, and in the past few months it sometimes seems as if all of those things have shown up in global events: Climates changing, wars ending, economies sinking, diseases spreading. If any one of us tried to take all of it in we not only wouldn't be able to sleep, we wouldn't be able to function. Sadly, that does happen to too many people.

What we can control is our own behavior. I know, I know, Psych 101. Bear with me for a moment. We can't predict our own stories, nor can we avoid the effects of the outside world on those stories. We can, however, choose to do the next right thing. Sometimes that thing is completing a task, sometimes offering an open ear, sometimes taking a nap.

Reading is just one form of storytelling. Stories can be told on film, in paintings, through dance, via music. All forms of storytelling teach us that there isn't one right way for everyone, and that may be the most transformative power stories hold. That things can change. That change can happen over long periods of time, or in an instant. That no matter what happens, at the very bottom of the box, there's hope.

How do I know that? Simple. A long time ago someone told me the story from Greek mythology about the first human woman created, who opened a box of all the world's troubles and released them. It didn't actually happen. It's not scientific truth. But it's a story that helps us understand transformation. In the middle of chaos, there is hope.

Focusing on stories in books strengthened my belief that change is possible and allowed me to face what it would take to help me make the changes I needed to during a difficult time in my life. Now that I've changed, I can share the power of stories with others, too. Why not start here by reading a poem by E. Ethelbert Miller, or Jessi Lewis? We have excerpts from books by Dax Devlon-Ross and Dr. John and Liza Marshall, and much more. Read their stories. You might find one of them transformative.

Bethanne Patrick is the Editorial Director of Movable Type and a board member of 1455 Lit Arts. A writer, critic, and author whose career has focused on books, publishing, and authors, she tweets @TheBookMaven. Her reviews and interviews appear frequently in The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, and on NPR Books, among others. A VP and Programs Committee chair of PEN/Faulkner, Patrick lives in Northern Virginia with her family, and too many books.



**Bethanne Patrick**  
*Editor, 1455 Movable Type*



**Watch Bethanne moderating 1455's Summer Fest Keynote with Douglas Stuart, Booker Prize Winning author of *Shuggie Bain***

[youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_sIUUSv9Qo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_sIUUSv9Qo)

# Call for Essays

*Movable Type* is always looking for short, original essays to publish in our Perspectives section. Our next issue, publishing in November, will be dedicated to original flash fiction and poetry. Please send 1-3 poems or a story (1,000 words or less) with the subject "MOVABLE TYPE SUBMISSION" to [info@1455litarts.org](mailto:info@1455litarts.org).

## What's new for 1455®



Get a glimpse into what makes your favorite creative types tick—from the writers who inspired them, to the weird habits that accompany the practice of writing, their favorite places in the world, and more. Check out this insightful series on our YouTube channel below.



1455's Moveable Feast is a new initiative bringing together directors of four distinct writing workshops based in different parts of the world who will offer writers a resource to find their community. Moveable Feast provides sponsored venues that curate readings, author talks, live interviews with writers, and other artistic events. We will encourage and, wherever appropriate, partner with local businesses to feature regional food, drink, music, and traditions.

**Subscribe** to *Movable Type* and other 1455 emails on our website: [1455litarts.org/movable-type](https://1455litarts.org/movable-type)



[facebook.com/1455litarts](https://facebook.com/1455litarts)



[@1455LitArts](https://www.instagram.com/1455LitArts)



[@1455LitArts](https://twitter.com/1455LitArts)



<https://bit.ly/2GEzNWM>

DESIGNED BY



morgan ryan

[morganryancreative.com](https://morganryancreative.com)